

Shrine Bowl will be Albaugh's last grid game

Written by Jim Ecker

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Dusty Albaugh has been practicing for Saturday's 39th Annual Shrine Bowl with guys who will play college football this fall for teams all over the midwest, but this probably will be the last time he plays in an organized game.

Albaugh thought about college football and had several offers from junior colleges and Iowa Conference schools, but he's decided to enroll at Iowa State University as a regular student and not pursue an athletic career in college.

Unless he changes his mind or something dramatic happens, the Marion High School senior will play for the North squad Saturday night at Jack Trice Stadium in Ames and then hang up the pads for good.

"My decision came down to my education. That was the most important thing," said Albaugh, who plans to major in biology. "I'm an athletic guy and I love sports, but you get to that next level and it's all about the education and where it's going to get you the farthest in life."

Albaugh is a versatile 6-foot, 175-pound athlete who has starred in football, basketball, baseball and track at Marion. He helped the Indians reach the Class 3A state baseball tournament Wednesday night with a clutch hit in a 6-5 victory over Williamsburg, so his prep baseball career will end next week at the state tournament in Des Moines.

His football career will end Saturday night in Ames. He played offense and defense at Marion, but he'll be strictly a defensive back for the North squad Saturday.

Albaugh scored 10 touchdowns and accumulated 1,164 yards in all-purpose yards for the Marion Indians last fall. He also intercepted seven passes and made 57 tackles.

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Albaugh could have pursued a college football career at Wartburg, Coe, Iowa Western Community College, Buena Vista, Simpson or South Dakota, but he felt the price tag to attend some of those schools would have been too high.

"I'm not going to lie, the money situation is tough," he said. "Anywhere that I would have gone for sports, it would be almost twice as much (as attending Iowa State). They talk scholarships and all this, but it adds up pretty fast."

Albaugh has not contacted the Iowa State football coaches about the possibility of joining the Cyclones as a walk-on, even though he'll be going to school at ISU. He's not sure what he'd do if he has a big game Saturday night and Iowa State Coach Paul Rhoads taps him on the shoulder with an offer.

"If that happens, then we'll see where that goes," he said. "You never know."

Albaugh has successfully juggled sports and academics during his career at Marion, but starting this fall the organized sports will fall away and he'll be a regular student like thousands of others.

"It will be a big adjustment," he acknowledged. "Hopefully I don't regret it."

He's already been contacted by people he knows at Iowa State about joining their intramural teams this year.

"Intramurals will be fun," he said. "I have a couple of friends who are up there and playing, and they said 'Hey, it's a blast and we'd love to have you on our team.' "

Albaugh is one of four Metro athletes who will play for the North team in the Shrine Bowl. He'll be joined by Jer Garman, a tailback from Linn-Mar; Chase Kleopfer, a defensive end from Xavier; and Ross Ellsworth, a lineman and linebacker from Kennedy.

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Garman will play football at the University of North Dakota this year. Kleopfer and Ellsworth are headed to Iowa Western Community College.